# Unleashing the Senses in the Art of the Americas (New York, 2-4 Apr 20)

New York, Apr 2–04, 2020
Deadline: Jan 19, 2020

Horacio Ramos, The Graduate Center, CUNY

[Deadline extended]

Touch, Taste, Turn: Unleashing the Senses in the Art of the Americas

The Fifth Annual Symposium of Latin American Art at the Institute of Fine Arts, the Graduate Center, and Columbia University: Presented by the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA).

CALL FOR PAPERS:

The Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, The Graduate Center at the City University of New York, Columbia University in the City of New York, and the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA) are pleased to announce the Fifth Annual Symposium of Latin American Art. "Touch, Taste, Turn: Unleashing the Senses in the Art of the Americas" will be held in New York on April 2, 3 and 4, 2020. The symposium will include keynote lectures by María Magdalena Campos-Pons and Claire Tancons, and a methodological workshop for the panelists led by Constance Classen.

Cultural and artistic practices that engage with multiple senses (e.g. sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch, and beyond) have a long history in the Americas. Indigenous civilizations and Afro-diasporic communities have developed artifacts and practices that promote forms of knowledge grounded in presence, materiality, and sensorial perception. Examples include Andean quipus or knotted cords used to communicate information, Haitian Vodun visual and ritualistic practices summoning sensorial and spiritual energies, and seventeenth-century Tupinambá ceremonial feather capes. These legacies continue to inspire artists today, such as Cecilia Vicuña, who produces environments that evoke quipus; María Magdalena Campos-Pons, whose mixed-media works incorporate bodily interventions and soundscapes; and Guadalupe Maravilla, whose performances explore movement and the experience of migration.

With these precedents in mind, this year's iteration of the symposium will bring together interdisciplinary and cross-temporal scholarship focusing on objects and practices by makers and artists in the Americas that engage in multisensorial experiences. By placing an emphasis on multiple senses and their interrelation, the event will draw upon and expand on the "sensory turn," an approach more commonly associated with disciplines such as anthropology, history, and cultural studies since the late 1980s. Unleashing the senses poses important challenges to art history, a discipline founded on the privileging of sight, by underscoring the role of multiple senses in the creation of

meaning.

Our event will recall previous undertakings by art historians and critics in the Americas who have embraced the sensorial to analyze or theorize Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx art. Examples range from Brazilian poet Ferreira Gullar's 1959 Manifesto Neo-Concreto to Nuyorican artist Raphael Montañez Ortiz's multimedia pedagogical projects in the 1970s, as well as the 1981 "Primer Coloquio Latinoamericano de Arte No Objetual y de Arte Urbano" in Medellín. Anticipating the "sensory turn," these efforts brought attention to practices previously undervalued in art history such as vernacular music and culture, self-taught arts and crafts, and performance.

Inspired by the rich and diverse artistic and historiographical production of the Americas, this event revolves around questions such as: What does a multisensorial approach bring to the understanding of Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx art? Conversely, what does the production of those regions bring to the understanding of multisensorialism? What strategies can artists and scholars adopt to complicate the sense of sight? How are sensorial experiences conditioned by social, cultural, and historical variables, and how can they help us understand those variables? How does a multisensorial model put pressure on art history? How can museums and cultural institutions promote experiences that go beyond visuality? Possible themes include but are not limited to:

- Immersive, participatory, and multisensorial installations (including soundscapes, haptic media, and techniques, olfactory and edible artworks, etc.);
- Artistic engagements with kinesthesia and synesthesia;
- Motion, performance, and physicality;
- The relation between multisensoriality and intermedial practices;
- Landscape, the built environment, and the senses;
- Artistic and cultural deployment of psychotropics;
- Technology's potential for sensorial expansion;
- Challenges to the hierarchization of the senses;
- The politics of sensorial repression or negation;
- Archival practices that transcend visual documentation;
- Spiritual knowledges, magical thinking, and ritualistic practices;
- Art engaging bodily pleasure and desire;
- Accessibility issues in curatorial and pedagogical strategies;
- The "sensory turn," interdisciplinary methodologies, and art history.

Current graduate students, recent graduates, and emerging scholars are invited to apply, especially those based in Latin America and the Caribbean. Topics from all historical periods of Latin American / Latinx / Chicanx / and Caribbean art (e.g. pre-Columbian, Colonial, Modern, Contemporary), as well as fields outside the realm of art history, but grounded in visual material (e.g. Cinema and Media Studies, Latin American and Latinx studies, Visual Culture) are highly encouraged. Abstracts will be accepted in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

To apply, please submit an abstract of up to 300 words to symposium@islaa.org by Monday, January 13, 2020. Applicants will be notified of their acceptance by Monday, February 3, 2020. Presentations will be limited to 20 minutes, with additional time for discussion. In your application, please indicate your current institutional affiliation and from where you will be traveling, as well as

the languages you speak. Limited funding may be available to assist with travel expenses.

This symposium is generously funded by the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA), the Rewald Endowment of the Graduate Center's Ph.D. Program in Art History, and the Department of Latin American and Iberian Cultures and the Institute for Latin American Studies at Columbia University. It is coordinated by Professors Edward J. Sullivan, Helen Gould Sheppard Professor in the History of Art at the Institute of Fine Arts; Anna Indych-López, Professor of 20th-Century Latin American and Latinx Art at the Graduate Center; Katherine Manthorne, Professor of Art of the United States, Latin America, and their Cross-Currents, 1750–1950 at the Graduate Center; Lisa Trever, Lisa and Bernard Selz Associate Professor in Pre-Columbian Art History and Archaeology; Alexander Alberro,Virginia Bloedel Wright '51 Professor of Art History, Barnard; and Kellie E. Jones, Professor. The symposium is organized by current PhD candidates Horacio Ramos and Francesca Ferrari and PhD students Juan Gabriel Ramírez Bolivar, Gwen Unger, Julián Sánchez González, and Tie Jojima.

For further information or with any questions, please contact symposium@islaa.org.

Reference:

CFP: Unleashing the Senses in the Art of the Americas (New York, 2-4 Apr 20). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 24, 2019 (accessed Nov 17, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/22163>.